

Legal Aid Ontario advisory committee on legal services to the Black community

LAO is working with an advisory committee to establish a new, community-based organization to deliver legal services to Black Ontarians who are experiencing anti-Black racism. The members of the advisory committee were not involved in the dispute resolution process between LAO and ACLC. Rather, they are advising LAO on how to best meet the needs the Black community going forward. The members of the advisory committee are:

Idil Abdillahi

Idil Abdillahi is an assistant professor at Ryerson University School of Social Work. Her research interests are grounded in the Black Radical Tradition, anti-Black racism and Black feminist thought, all of which are informed by the struggles and active resistance of Black communities locally and internationally. She has written numerous peer-reviewed publications and book chapters centering on themes of Blackness/anti-Blackness, Black studies in policy, poverty and the advancement of the Black liberation at the intersection of social services.

Outside of her work in the academy, she is Board Chair for a community-based mental health organization that serves the needs of racialized peoples. Recently she was awarded the Viola Desmond Award and was named “a professor who made a mark”. With over 15 years of experience in addictions, mental health, immigration, criminal justice, women’s services, community development and grassroots organizing, Abdillahi is an activist-academic and community organizer.

Zanana Akande

Zanana Akande was the first Black woman elected to the Ontario Legislature, and the first Black woman to serve

as a cabinet minister in Canada. A New Democratic MLA from 1990 to 1994, she represented the downtown Toronto riding of St. Andrew-St. Patrick and served as a cabinet minister in the government of Bob Rae.

After leaving politics, Ms. Akande served as president of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Canadian Alliance of Black Educators and Toronto Child Abuse Centre. She worked with other community-based groups including the United Way of Greater Toronto, the Family Services Association and the Elizabeth Fry Society. She was the recipient of the African Canadian Achievement Award for Education and the Award of Distinction from the Congress of Black Women.

Sandy Hudson

Sandy Hudson is a community organizer who has spearheaded anti-racism and anti-violence initiatives. Ms. Hudson founded Black Lives Matter Toronto in 2014.

As a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Ms. Hudson is a co-founder of the Black Liberation Collective Canada, a campus-based extension of Black Lives Matter.

Ms. Hudson makes regular appearances in the media to discuss race issues and has had pieces published in the Toronto Star, Huffington Post, Now Magazine and TVO.org. Her contributions to *New Framings on Anti-racism and Race and Racialization: Essential Readings* are to be published this year.

Aba Stevens

Aba Stevens is a New York and Ontario-called attorney with a long-established commitment to equity and human rights. She has served in a voluntary capacity for numerous community organizations and initiatives, including as vice chairperson of The Black Secretariat. More recently, she organized a coalition of community organizations and equity-seeking individuals to respond to proposed diversity-related amendments to the Ontario Securities Commission's corporate governance rule.

Aba's legal practice has focused on securities, white collar criminal and constitutional law. As legal counsel to the Ontario Securities Commission and the Canadian Securities Transition Office, she has advised on wide ranging law reform initiatives relating to corporate governance, systemic risk, derivatives, market regulation, capital raising, data collection and emergency powers. Through her ongoing work to reform Canada's securities regulatory framework including the proposed Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System, she specializes in modelling and advising through complex transitions.

Rinaldo Walcott

Rinaldo Walcott is Director of the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. As an interdisciplinary scholar, Mr. Walcott has published writings on music, literature, film and theatre, policy and other topics. His research and publications focus on Black cultural politics, histories of colonialism in the Americas, multiculturalism, citizenship and diaspora; gender and sexuality; and social, cultural and public policy.

Mr. Walcott is the author of *Black Like Who: Writing*

Black Canada; the editor of *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*; and co-editor with Roy Moodley of *Counselling Across and Beyond Cultures: Exploring the Work of Clemment Vontress in Clinical Practice*. He published *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora and Black Studies* (Insomniac Press, 2016).

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